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INDEPENDENT SPIRIT

Vol. No. VI, No. 1

Winter 1985

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INDEPENDENT SPIRIT

Vol. No. VI, No. 1

Winter 1985

True Romance — Animated And Live



Images from Jan Millsapps' film, TRUE ROMANCE.

Joan Strommer

True Romance. Jan Millsapps. 1984. 16mm. Color. Sound. 22m.

Jan Millsapps' *True Romance*, a 22 minute animation and live-action film, describes the emotional state of "being in love." This short, poetic film tangles with this ephemeral, suspended condition of "being." The emotional state of "being in love" is pregnant with expectations drawn from novels, films, and advertising. A generic comic strip kiss is redrawn by Jan who characterizes herself as the blond in the frame kissing a man. Suddenly, during the passionate kiss, her eyes open. The "eyes open" encounter with the phenomena of "being in love" is the subject of the film. "Eyes open" detachment allows an objective seeing of the emotion. Jan is observing the man and herself in an attempt to learn which of her responses are her own and which are borrowed from predrawn texts.

Jan's inner state is described as we watch the kiss in the comic strip; a red-tinted image of the man at the door; a story involving an image of bees under

her skirt; a statue expressing total immobilization; and the death of this crippled, limited self pictured in state as Jan ceremoniously offers a rose. For Jan, being in love is like being caught in a timeless, limitless void, as illustrated by her "heart hole" image — which occurs at several points in the film.

I enjoyed the exaggeration of the red-tinted scene of Jan opening the door. The sound of a melodramatic organ chord accompanies the title, "TTS HIM!", graphically portraying the riveting interruption of a man in her life "at the door." His presence causes a disruption expressed as a shattering of Jan's sense of time and continuity, and as a potentially violent and life-threatening event. This overstatement is humorous. Still more curious is the fact that this scene does not develop; the man does not enter the door, but the image of the door opening is repeated throughout the film until we hear Jan say, "Get out. Get out of here," juxtaposed with an image of bed sheets.

The image of a skirt with swarming bees is Jan's first notion of crisis with her part in this relationship. The bees under the skirt seem a perfect metaphor for a threatening invasion of self. Later, in a flip animation which she titles, "A View from my Vagina," she exercises this threat and puts her sexuality in perspective with her whole being. The audience laughs and feels a release with this section of the film because it is disarming in its honesty, and also because of the oddity of experiencing (seeing) her spacial (mental) environment from the vantage point of a private, yet not so private or unpossessed, part of her body.

Visually, the vagina scene relates to the scene of Jan's heart — which is depicted as a black hole in her chest. The "heart hole" image creates the idea of a limitless void into which roses, food, and other objects are dropped yet never produce an accumulated effect. The heart seems to insatiably devour all manner of offerings compensating for its emotional deprivation.

The static, one-angle view from the vagina is also profoundly limited. Both regions of the body are expressed as powerless, vulnerable and naive.

What is so unique about the film is the inventiveness in communicating the emotional condition of "being in love." Interwoven with animated images are live-action sections with Jan as central figure as she leaves the house or as she observes a man from her protected position as a stone statue. The real and the unreal scenes help to make tangible the experiences of the feelings. She engages the help of the animated image, gaining "sight" for her feelings, which can be very specifically expressed and controlled in the drawings. It is surprising how well the images read as descriptions of feelings and how language is too indirect or too "used" to articulate what Jan must say. She actually stutters and mumbles when trying to talk about love.

Regrettably, a great deal of emotional energy is spent in a confusing and exhausting series of dead ends. A bathtub of blue tears is juxtaposed with the sounds of a woman sobbing expressing the voluminous amount of time spent lamenting, but finally the man and the other self is expelled.

It seems an heroic moment because the romantic relationship is expressed as full of illusion and unrealized expectations. The 19th century philosopher, Arthur Schopenhauer in *The World As Will And Representation*, maintains that the sexual attraction and selection process is a delusion and does not contribute to a higher fulfillment as it is believed. Responsibility for a higher degree of self-actualization comes through working individually, not in a specific union with one person. Pair bonding is connected with species survival and is behavior low on the level of self-actualization however compelling and strong the urge.

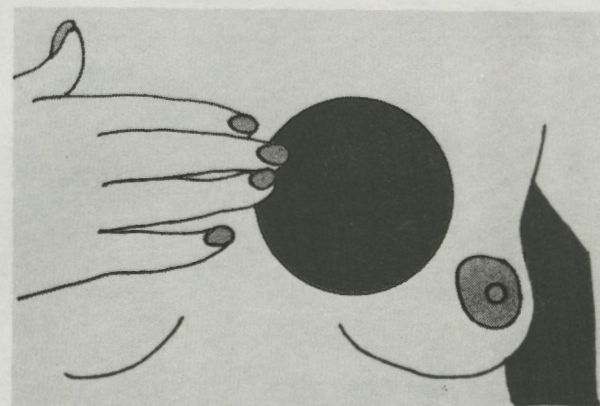
True Romance has an emotional kinship to another regional film, *Aqui Se Lo Halla* by Lee Sokol. In the film, a man recounts his romantic infatuation as a young boy with his teacher. It is a much cooler account in comparison to *True Romance*, which is from the point of view of a woman who is emotionally charged and disabled by her state.

Lee's film is also about illusion and vulnerability. A red scarf is seductively drawn across her body and intercut with slow motion footage of a bullfight. Sexual encounter is described as a ritual dance of enticement/attraction intercut with images of violence/dissolutionment. Lee's image connections state a rejection of the romantic ideal.

It is a valuable experience to see behavior patterns, language and images that describe an emotional state. In Jan's exaggerated expression of "being in love," we share an experience of emotional growth. It is refreshing to see someone reveal the quality of this experience. Judging from audience response, the film connected with many people. One student felt this film singular in its attempt to deal with private suffering. Jan offers humor and resolution to her dilemma. I will always recall on occasion of self pity, the wailing woman who is entrapped in despair and, consequently, view my own feeling in better perspective to regain my vitality.

(Continued on Page 7)

ON THE COVER: Artwork from TRUE ROMANCE, a film by South Carolina animator Jan Millsapps.



"...being in love is like being caught in a timeless, limitless void, as illustrated by the heart hole image in TRUE ROMANCE."

Exhibition

Film and Video: Institutions and Independence

George Lellis

Almost 200 independent filmmakers, media educators and film industry representatives assembled in Harrisonburg, Virginia the week of July 27 - August 4 for "Producing Film and Video: Institutions and Independence," the annual conference of the University Film and Video Association. Throughout the week's sessions, participants discussed methods of financing and distributing independent media productions and the relationship between such productions and the commercially-oriented works.

The conference speakers by and large portrayed the commercial film and television industries in a current state of disarray, unsure of which way to move with the uncertain future of the broadcast, cable and cassette markets. In meetings and screenings, one could also talk with and see work by an impressive selection of independent film and video producers and artists, people whose work has grown up through the cracks of a monolithic but vulnerable commercial production system.

The conference organizers screened several Hollywood films: *Grandview, U.S.A.*, which was introduced by its director, Randal Kleiser, and *Tightrope* premiered at the conference within days and weeks, respectively, of their nationwide theatrical openings. Maverick producer, Walter Shenson, both entertained his audience with stories of the making of his two Beatles movies, and fielded questions before and after a showing of his latest commercial effort, *Reuben, Reuben*. Conference participants also saw W.D. Richter's *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai* the very evening before *The Washington Post* announced that the film's Hollywood distributor had cancelled its release because of unenthusiastic preview reactions.

The real substance and significance of the conference, however, lay in the chance it provided to see recent works by independent film and video producers. Many of the works shown on the James

Madison University campus were political in nature. William Sloan of New York's Museum of Modern Art gave this aspect of the convention a historical perspective by screening *The Passaic Textile Strike*, a long-forgotten 1926 feature documenting the year-long efforts by organized labor to shut down textile mills in Passaic, New Jersey because of wage cuts, speed-ups and lengthened working hours. A remarkably powerful and engrossing piece of propaganda, *The Passaic Textile Strike* represents a previously lost part of both American social history and the history of the documentary film. With its evidence laid before the audience bluntly and starkly, *The Passaic Textile Strike* is all the more remarkable for having been funded by the workers themselves through the American branch of Workers International Relief. The Museum of Modern Art has just now struck new prints of the film for non-theatrical release.

The Passaic Textile Strike proved a provocative companion piece to California Newsreel's *The Business of America...*, a study of the decline in the American steel industry done in much the same style as the group's previous, well-circulated effort, *Controlling Interest*. Although *The Business of America...* makes no attempt to hide its bias against U.S. Steel, the movie is nonetheless a thoughtful, analytic work, one that carefully avoids simplistic leftist solutions. Larry Daressa, President of California Newsreel, commented that the film's purpose was to provoke workers to look for their own solutions to the knotty problems the movie outlines, to take charge of their own situations and not be dependent on management to rescue them.

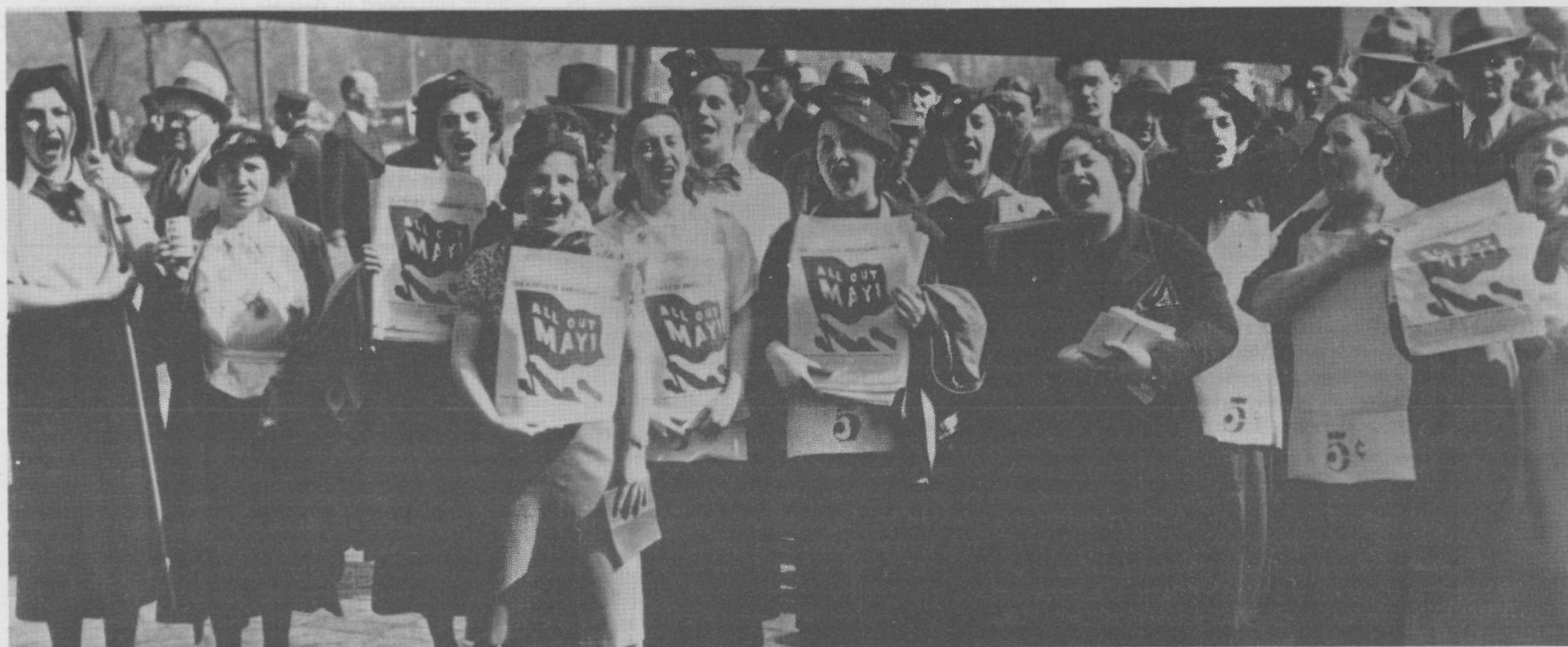
Particularly evident throughout the week-long proceedings was the presence of what one might call a-coastal filmmakers, working in the heartlands of America rather than New York or Los Angeles. Gordon Quinn of Kartemquin Films (Chicago), Dee Davis of the Appalshop Film Collective (Whitesburg, Kentucky), Richard Weise of Film-in-



A still from *HAROLD OF ORANGE*, a film written by Gerald Vizenor and directed by Rick Weise of Film-in-the-Cities.

the-Cities (Minneapolis-St. Paul), and Aaron Ezechial, producer of the film *Seeing Red* (Dayton), all were on hand to present quality work.

Appalshop's *Strangers and Kin* was one of the week's most striking films, a protest work treating the people of Appalachia as an oppressed minority



A chorus of young Communist women singing at a May Day parade in the mid-1930s is a still from the film *SEEING RED* by Julia Reichert and James Klein.

and examining the mindless stereotyping of so-called hillbillies in the popular media. A consciousness-raising movie of a high order, *Strangers and Kin* represented to this viewer—who has always found Appalshop's work relevant mainly for those who already have a predispositioned interest in the Appalachian region's culture—a quantum leap forward in the collective's work. *Strangers and Kin* is a fascinating compendium of old film clips documenting everything from Ma and Pa Kettle and Li'l Abner to *The Beverly Hillbillies* and *Deliverance*, mixed in with stylized, Brechtian inserts quoting condescending commentators about the mountain folk's odd ways. In its pride and justified anger, *Strangers and Kin* puts all of Appalshop's other work in a new context.

Another ethnic group, Native Americans, took the floor in *Harold of Orange*, a short but complex comedy scripted by Native American novelist Gerald Vizenor and directed by Film-in-the-Cities' Rick Weise. *Harold of Orange* deals with the efforts of a sharp, spirited Indian to win support for a grant proposal from an all Anglo grants commission. With an almost impenetrable array of puns, cultural references, and deliberately manipulated stereotypes, *Harold of Orange's* irreverence, verbal wit, and deadpan manner suggest a kind of Native American Monty Python.

The most famous of the conference's Midwestern films was *Seeing Red*, Julia Reichert and James Klein's Academy Award nominated feature documentary about the American Communist Party. Reichert and Klein intercut present-day interviews with both current and former members of the party, contrasting them with newsreel footage which documents the history of Communists in the United States. The filmmakers mix an obvious respect for the party members' dedication and activism in the 1930's and '40's with clear suspicion of the party's simultaneous authoritarianism and imbedded sexism. As an antidote to a glamorous gloss like *Reds*, *Seeing Red* is nonetheless as involuntarily constructed as a good fiction film, with the idealism and elation of the depression and war years giving way to the persecution and post-Stalinist revelations of the 1950's. Despite its ubiquitous talking heads, *Seeing Red* maintains an interest and momentum that lags only near the end, when its litany of qualified disillusionment goes on for what some audience members felt was a bit too long.

Among the most controversial films of the week was the one that beat out *Seeing Red* for the Best Feature Documentary Oscar, Emile Ardolino's *He Makes Me Feel Like Dancing*, a portrayal of Jacques D'Amboise's activities teaching dance to New York City school children. While one camp was completely seduced by the movie's energy, manic cutting rate and the charisma of D'Amboise himself, others found it a rather vapid attempt to re-do Hollywood's let's-put-on-a-show genre in the documentary format. Passing carefully over all of the issues of race, class and money latent in its material, *He Makes Me Feel Like Dancing* suggests instead that everything will be all right if the children of the world just learn a little discipline and commitment as hoofers.

The biggest disappointment at UFVA was a lecture-screening by Frank Mouris, the animator and experimental filmmaker responsible for popular works like *Frank Film* and *Coney*. Mouris, who arriving late after having taken a plane to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania instead of Harrisonburg, Virginia, brought a reel from his new, independently-financed live action feature, *Hot Talk*. After hearing from Mouris about all of his machinations to get investors from outside usual funding sources, one wonders why he bothered: the end result is the thoroughly conventional stuff of oversexed TV situation comedy, about a horny law student who befriends a young couple who have their own problems relating to one another.

Audience members chided one another afterward for being so polite, limiting their questions to topics such as film stock, shooting ratio, and the cost of blowing the print up to 35mm.

Experimental impulses were far more evident in the video work at the conference. This participant passed over screenings and analytical sessions about rock videos to attend other events, but what one might call the rock video question was constantly in the air, with opinions divided about whether music television represents a point of growth or degeneracy for the medium. Perhaps the most formally beautiful work on display in any medium was Bill Viola's *Hatsu Yume* (*First Dream*), a video study, running just under an hour, of images shot in Japan.

Beginning with images from nature—of sun, sky, water, rocks, forests—Viola uses the intimacy of the video image to study meditatively the shapes, colors and textures of these natural surroundings. Challenging the usual anthropocentric bias of most film and video imagery, Viola makes the human figure peripheral to most of his shots, equal in weight to the surrounding plants and rocks. In the latter minutes of the tape, Viola shifts to glimpses of a city at night, mixing car lights and neon signs with images of rain and fire, such as from a lighted match or from candles floating ceremoniously on a pool of water. Viola somehow makes the tape's urban images seem as organic and natural as those of the forest to which he returns at *Hatsu Yume's* end. His consistent and effective use of slow motion suggests something like a Stan Brakhage film on barbiturates: gentle, pokey camera movements allow one to savor carefully Viola's lovely abstractions of light and reflection.

An effort by Roger Bailey, a professor at Saint Lawrence University, "Un Chien Andalou and the Question of Postmodernism," covered the uncertain boundary between art criticism and art, between presented lecture and exhibited tape. Bailey took two videotapes, each with a copy of Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí's *Andalusian Dog*, and presented them simultaneously. One, in negative, was on a designated "modernist" television; the other, in

positive image, was on a "postmodernist" television. As the two programs played in synchronization, Bailey had subtitled both with sets of binary opposite terms outlining the characteristics of modernism and postmodernism respectively (e.g., design/chance, distance/participation, hypotaxis/parataxis). To Buñuel and Dalí's credit, one could never successfully categorize *Andalusian Dog* as completely modernist or postmodernist, but after Bailey's stimulating desecration, the film will never seem the same again.

In summary, this 38th Annual University Film and Video Association Conference provided a peculiar meld of university academics and media professionals, hashing out the mechanical questions of how to get work financed, produced and distributed, and the aesthetic questions of what the work means and achieves once it's on the screen. Any conclusions must be contradictory. For every filmmaker using independent work as a way into the commercial system, one could find others seeking to escape the constraints of the marketplace through independent work. The conference attested to the vitality of independent media work in America, but also to its fragility and tentativeness. The question to educators was clear and constant: should colleges and universities train students to work within the given systems, to subvert them, or both? Questions to filmmakers similarly reflected a concern that they remain responsible to their local communities, reflecting these communities' problems and cultures, even while such independent filmmakers may want wide exhibition for their efforts. Answers to these questions were at best fragmentary, but at the panel discussions and less formal debates that came between the conference's screenings there was little doubt that the issues were of central importance to all involved.

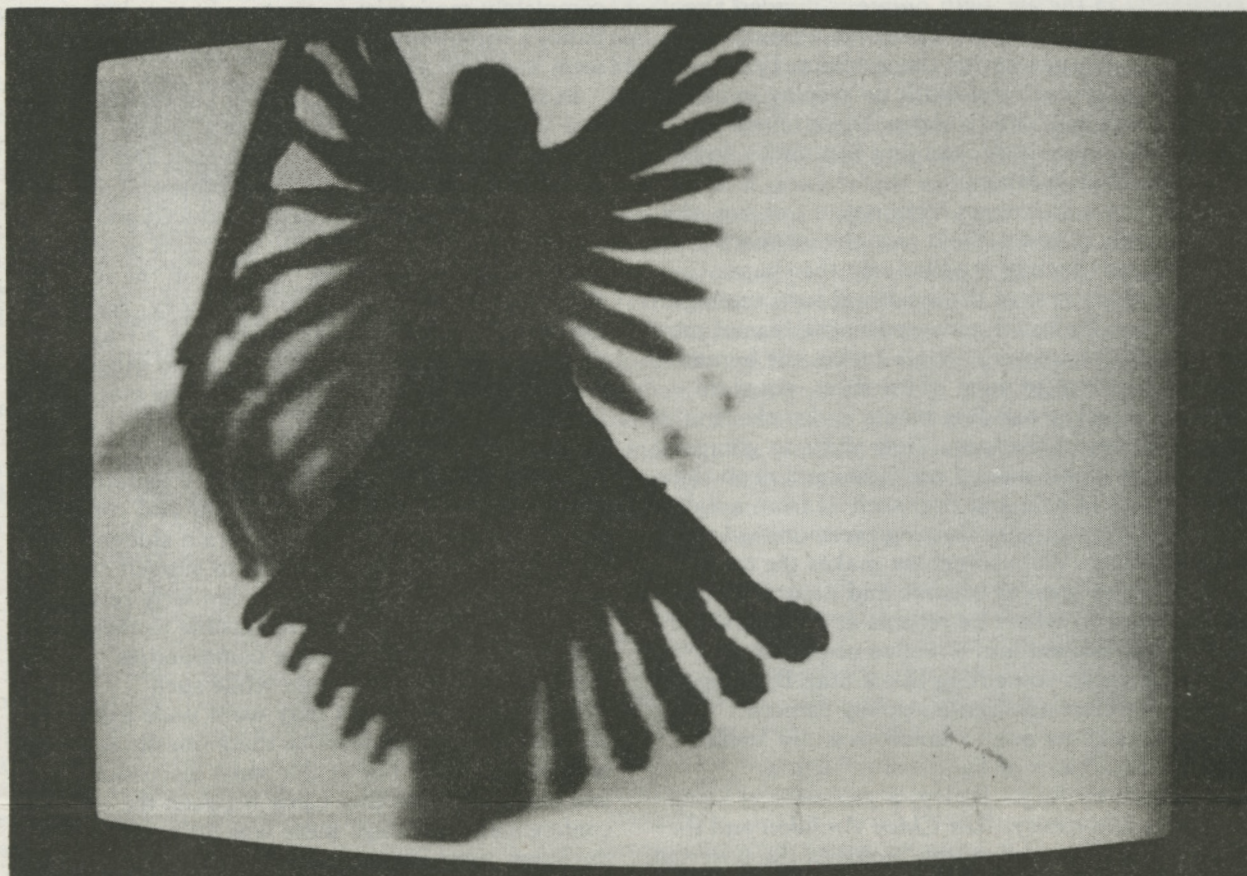
George Lellis is Associate Professor of Communications at Coker College in Hartsville, South Carolina.



Communists protesting Jewish persecution in 1933 is a still from *SEEING RED*, a film by James Klein and Julia Reichert.

Reviews

Video Visions



A still from *JOCUNDITY 3 PHASE 1*, a videotape by Marty Vermillion and Michael Ferguson.

Victor Velt

Video Visions. Marty Vermillion/Michael Ferguson. ¾ inch video. 40m.

Applying their skills in independent video production are South Carolina's Marty Vermillion and Michael Ferguson who collaborate under the name of Apogee Videofilms. Their offering, *Video Visions*, is a 40-minute collection of shorts produced over the last year that are entertaining and encompass a wide range of material.

The opener is *Go For It*, an upbeat dance video featuring Mike's sister, Lisa, backed by the rock sounds of Stiff Little Fingers, and wide shots of the Charleston area. Lisa gives you the grand tour as she swings, hops, and dances through the streets to the beat of the music and rapid-cut editing. There's enough raw energy combined with colorized, split-screen effects to keep you hopping right along with her. This is not innovative video, of course. It's entertainment aimed at a broad audience. While it has the look of a bigger production, it was made solely by the wits of a handful of people.

Mike and Marty began working together 10 years ago in high school. Under a special program they elected to study Super-8 film production for a 9-week period. Since then they have continued to work together in all phases of film and video. Marty now has a position at a television station in Charleston, where the pair does most of their post-production work on the weekends. Although they now live some 200 miles apart, they manage a steady production schedule through careful planning. Each new piece is sketched out before shooting begins, and production is kept organized. With their wives, Elaine and Janice, tracking the shot sheets, and the help of a few others, Mike and Marty draw some very professional looking video

from a shoestring budget. Of course, having access to a good studio helps, but it is their skill with the equipment and effective use of materials at hand that contribute the most to this program.

Of note is *Jocundity 3*, a videodance trilogy that allows a singular video effect to kinetically explore

a musical piece. In Phase One, the silhouette of a dancer radiates trails of movement to the rippling sounds of Appalachian hammer dulcimer music. A monitor was used here so that the dancer was able to see the effect her movements had on the image, allowing her to perform interactively with the wave-like environment. In Phase Two, the dancer's image is chroma-keyed onto a colorized journey down a country road. The bluesy piano accompaniment for the piece is provided by South Carolina artist Maggie Ree. Phase Three closes this set with the dancer's silhouette doubled onto a flowing background of video feedback. Contrasting colors and patterns fill the dancer's twin image in step with pastoral chamber music. This segment of the program reflects the more artistic side of the Apogee team.

A more conventional piece is *Gangster Style*, offering a mock confrontation between rival breakdance gangs. No special effects here; instead, dramatic camera angles are used to intensify the street action. Each progressive shot carefully assembles the story line and choreography of the dancers, all members of the Zodiacs. This is a light, entertaining work that is well shot and edited.

Happy Feet is a dance piece which has been shown in *Night Flight*, and is probably the best known work on the program. As with the other works here, it shows some good location shooting and competent post-production work.

The program is not without its low points. In *Bazoomifier Cream*, the viewer is thrown back to a poorly conceived satire of a TV commercial for — of all things — a breast developer cream. This is old material that tries to spoof the high-key sales pitches found on television, but amounts to nothing more than bad burlesque. Undoubtedly, there are those who will find this sketch amusing,



A still from *GO FOR IT*, a videotape by Marty Vermillion and Michael Ferguson.

but I find its heavy-handed delivery in poor taste and out of place with the rest of the program.

A somewhat more successful attempt at parodying TV is made with *Gerald's Recaps*, which opens like a real commercial with a view of a garage keyed into the center of a revolving tire. Still, there is no effort made to go beyond what is now standard TV fare. One can't always take a silly subject, and make it funny through exaggeration.

The program does offer a serious side, with a few contemporary dramatic works. In *Funerals*, Alan Evan portrays a young man who is having to

deal with his father's funeral. Delivering his monologue while leaning against a dark wall, he is at first ambivalent about the matter, but gradually changes to see things the way his father did. In *War Time*, Susan Jacobs delivers a timely message on the business side of war. These pieces do not cover light subjects, and they add an important dimension to the program.

Overall, this is an enjoyable tape that tries to provide something for everybody. It would seem that Marty and Michael have learned a good deal about production since they shot Super-8 in school. After trying their hand at a little bit of everything,

it will be interesting to see in which direction they now take their work. For more information contact:

Apogee Videofilms
123 Linville Drive,
Moore, S.C. 29369

Victor Velt edits the New-Arts Newsletter in Ft. Lauderdale, FL.

Comments

Works In Progress

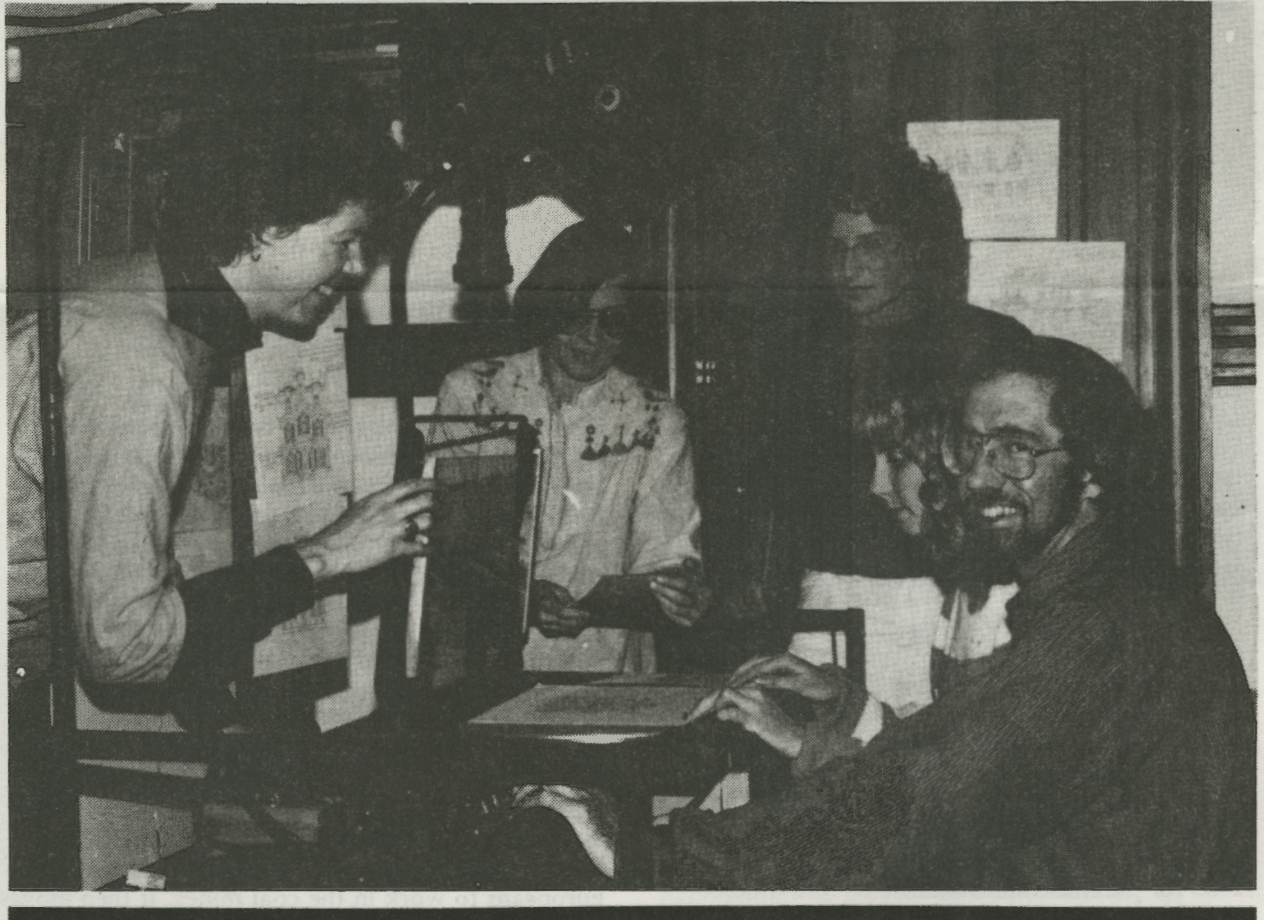
Paty Bustamante

Bill Turner (Mebane, N.C.)

After several discouraging attempts to obtain funding for his latest film, Bill Turner with the help of some animator friends, has begun production of *Georgian and Gingerbread*, a 16mm cel animation. *Georgian and Gingerbread* is a survey of the history and development of residential architectural styles in the 19th century. It begins in the early 1800's with the Georgian form and it evolves through Greek, Gothic and Italian until it reaches the end of the century when the styles returned to a revival of Georgian architecture. The basic image is a house that chronologically metamorphoses into the various architectural forms. "(The film) is an ambitious project: it will be approximately 12 minutes of animation. I'm producing and directing the film as well as doing some of the art work. I'm working with several North Carolina animators: David Haynes, Lea Lackey, Jane DeKoven, Elaine Cecelski, Cynny Crossman, and Kate Smith who are all doing equal parts of the film. I did all the master drawings for each architectural form. The animators are basically doing the in-betweens, evolving one style into another, as they follow a script that has been broken down into timings showing what has to happen and when. Even though I'm keeping artistic control over everything, I'm letting the animators have creative input. There will be a consistency in the film, and yet there will be variation." Bill has been interested in 19th century architecture for some time, and throughout the years he has done extensive research on the subject. Most of the information was collected from original 19th century resources, mainly pattern books and photographic records. *Georgian and Gingerbread* will be a film with a strong educational content—"a film that delivers information in a form that is visually interesting and unique. Many educational films are only content oriented with no real stimulants to keep your interest. I want this film to appeal visually to people." Due to its educational content, it is quite possible that *Georgian and Gingerbread* will be distributed by a commercial house, but Bill may distribute the film independently. For further information on this and other films contact: Bill Turner, Route 2 Box 213A, Mebane, N.C. 27302.

Kent Moorhead (Oxford, Mississippi)

George McLean is the working title for a 60 minute documentary about McLean's life and his involvement and influence in the community of Tupelo, Mississippi. "I am working with Vaughn Grisham, a sociology professor at the University of



GEORGIAN AND GINGERBREAD animators from left to right: Lea Lackey-Zachman, Jane DeKoven, Elaine Cecelski, Kate Smith and Bill Turner.

Mississippi, who has done extensive work both historically and sociologically in Tupelo. Vaughn's interest is in the dynamics of McLean's programs and leadership and how they affected the community; my interest is in telling a strong story about a man who was able to convince businessmen that their own self-interest lay in building up the community." George McLean came from a large farming family in central Mississippi. He was only one generation away from slavery and felt a strong responsibility towards those that worked the land, people who, in essence, allowed him to live comfortably and have an education. He was driven throughout his life by a need to give back to the state of Mississippi. After studying sociology, philosophy and religion at various universities, McLean briefly pursued the ministry and then teaching. Eventually, he started working for the *Grenada Sentinel* and there he realized the potential a newspaper has. In 1934, with money

borrowed from his family, George McLean bought the bankrupt *Journal* in Tupelo. There, he was able to promote and organize a wide variety of community improvements. McLean became involved in agricultural, industrial and educational reforms that vastly improved the living standards of Tupelo. "The Tupelo Model - the community organization system proposed by McLean and adopted by Tupelo - is copied internationally, and Tupelo is one of the most progressive and prosperous cities in Mississippi - a dramatic turnaround for an area that in the 1940 census was listed as the poorest in the State."

This film has been funded in part by a grant from the Mississippi Committee for the Humanities, a grant from CREATE (a non-profit foundation in Tupelo), and a grant from the Community Development Foundation in Tupelo, Mississippi. For more information contact: Kent Moorhead, 305 Washington Ext., Oxford, Mississippi 38655.



Appalshop filmmaker Scott Faulkner on location with the Carter family during production of *SUNNY SIDE OF LIFE*.

Appalshop (Whitesburg, KY)

Anthony Slone — *Sunny Side of Life*, a new Appalshop film celebrates the original Carter Family, down home music, and life in the Poor Valley of Virginia. Filmmaker Anthony Slone says, "*Sunny Side of Life* is about old time mountain music in Southwestern Virginia, the place that produced musicians like Beechard Smith, Charlie Osborne, Sara Maybelle, and A.P. Carter." The film explores the intertwining of music and life and Joe and Janette Carter's dedication to perpetuate this music every Saturday night at the Carter Family Fold in Hiltons, Virginia — "Admission's three dollars, children half-priced, we always start on time, and let's try not to smoke so much." The fifty-six minute film was made by Slone, Jack Wright, and Scott Faulkner. Production was funded by the Lyndhurst Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Virginia Commission for the Arts, and the Kentucky Arts Council. *Sunny Side of Life* will be available in January 1985 for purchase and rental.

Mimi Pickering — *Buffalo Creek Revisited* is a 30 minute color film which looks at efforts to rebuild the Buffalo Creek community in the years since the 1972 disaster. When a coal waste collapsed at the head of this crowded hollow in Southern West Virginia, a wall of sludge and water slashed through the valley killing 125 people and leaving 4000 homeless. The Pittston Company, owners of the dam, immediately denied responsibility for the disaster, claiming it was "an act of God." Appalshop's 1975 release, *The Buffalo Creek Flood: An Act of Man*, documented the destruction left by the flood while seeking out and examining the causes of such a tragedy. *Buffalo Creek Revisited* explores the second disaster on Buffalo Creek; the survivors' efforts to rebuild the physical and emotional community shattered by the flood were thwarted by government insensitivity and a century old pattern of corporate control of the region's land and resources. *Buffalo Creek Revisited* was partially funded by the Humanities Foundation of West Virginia, a state program of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Mimi Pickering directed the film which

will be available for sale or rental in December, 1984.

Elizabeth Barret — The second film in Appalshop's History of Appalachia Series, *Long Journey Home*, is in production and film completion is planned for Fall 1985. The film focuses on the ethnic groups who migrated to the mountains. It will show the way the region was settled and the experiences of those who came to the region. It deals with some of the major causes of migration, the economic pushes and pulls as well as the non-economic social and personal reasons people move or stay. It will show how the area has been tied to the national and international economic system as shown through migration history. Through the personal stories of individuals and their experiences in the mountains, the film will show how groups have come to define themselves through a combination of racial, geographic, occupational, and ethnic identification. The film moves from the Cherokee Indians as first inhabitants, through early European settlers, to blacks building railroads and joining southern Europeans to work in the coal mines. It then moves to the recent returnees from urban industrial centers who are coming back "home." The film will tell the story through the individuals who experienced them and the remembrances of their families. The interviews will be combined with history related by four "history-tellers," young, educated members of different ethnic groups who relate past history, not as outsiders but as participant guides.

Archival footage and documents will supplement the life stories. Music will be a key element in the film's format. Within Appalachia, America's complex of cultures, instruments and song still speak for the vitality of the migration process. The ending will concentrate on the future of the region, exploring what may be happening in Appalachia in the coming decades. The "history-tellers" will talk about what is happening with their families and communities today; who is returning and who is leaving; what economic pressures there are and what responses they see emerging. If massive migrations are over, can regions such as Appalachia restore and develop a more regional economy in order for the people who want to live here to survive?

For more information on these and other Appalshop productions contact: Scot Oliver, 306 Madison St., Box 734, Whitesburg, KY 41858. (606) 633-0108.

Mark Mori (Atlanta, GA)

Mark is in the production of his first film, a yet unnamed documentary about nuclear war and the Savannah River Nuclear Plant in Aiken, South Carolina. The Savannah River Plant produces all the plutonium and tritium that is used in U.S. and NATO nuclear weapons. The documentary will deal mainly with the issue of nuclear war and nuclear weapons production and, to a certain extent, it will discuss the health and environmental effects resulting from nuclear radiation. Mark is in the process of rough editing several interviews with people who once were employees at the Savannah River Plant. William Lawless, a former Senior Project Engineer for waste management, resigned a year ago after futile attempts to publish reports on (both radioactive and non-radioactive), the pollution of the environment. Lawless felt the issues were of vital importance and he left the plant in order to go public with the information. George Couch, a former maintenance mechanic at the Savannah River Plant, is now suffering from several diseases, including tritium deposits and retention in his body, which he feels are a result of exposure to radiation throughout the years. Both Couch and his wife talk about the history of the plant and the effects of living next door to it. David Jennings is an ecologist who worked at the Savannah River Plant Laboratory and his efforts have been concentrated on trying to stop a new reactor from being started because it will have a destructive effect on the surrounding environment. The new reactor would be used to step up the production of plutonium to expand the nuclear stockpile and to replace the plutonium in the weapons that already exist. Mark has also documented some of the activities of the Savannah River Peace Encampment, an anti-nuclear group, that held protests and blockages at the plant throughout the summer. Included are interviews with the people who were arrested during the course of several demonstrations. In addition, Mark is trying to schedule an interview with an official spokesperson from the Savannah River Plant which will most likely be shot in conjunction with a Republican Party Rally, to be held at Aiken, S.C., supporting the "Bomb Plant." Another future and important interview will be Bob Alvarez, head of the Nuclear Weapon and Power Project in Washington, D.C., who is publishing in *AMBIO* — the Journal of the Swedish Royal Academy of Sciences — a controversial article about the Savannah River Plant. Mark has contacted several filmmakers across the country who will provide previously shot footage of the Savannah River Plant. The interviews are a central part in this documentary because most of the information will be conveyed through them and at this point there are no specific plans to have a narration. Funding for this project was provided in part by a grant from the Cultural Affairs Bureau of the City of Atlanta and by private donations contributed through the IMAGE Film/Video Center in Atlanta. For further information on this documentary contact: Mark Mori, P.O. Box 5202, Station E, Atlanta, GA. 30307.

Paty Bustamante is an independent animator in Columbia, South Carolina.

Resources

The Independent Media Artist Resource Center — New To The Southeast

The Native American Indian Media Corporation (NAIM) is a nonprofit organization formed to work with and train Native Americans in all areas of art and communications technology. Through its Independent Media Artist Resource Center (IMARC), NAIM also provides equipment and services to independent film and video artists at low rates, with a flexible fee scale for other non-profit and commercial organizations.

Located in Strawberry Plains, Tennessee, (near Knoxville) IMARC provides access to professional-quality film production and post-production equipment. Services and facilities immediately available include:

- **THREE FULLY-EQUIPPED EDITING SUITES.** Each suite is available for access on a 24-hour a day basis at low rates to independent film and video producers. Equipment includes an 8-plate Steenbeck, a 6-plate Moviola, and access to a Sony 5850 off-line video editing system. Accommodations include work space, a bathroom and shower, and a living/study area (film suites only). The IMARC facility provides an environment conducive to creating quality, independent works of media art.
- **PRODUCTION EQUIPMENT.** Equipment presently includes an Arriflex 16BL, an Eclair ACL, Canon and Bolex cameras, and other support equipment.
- **EQUIPMENT ACCESS GRANTS.** Grants will be provided for access to IMARC film equipment in order to assist socially-conscious media. Through this program, NAIM intends to promote projects which express and deal sensitively with diverse and unique human concerns. IMARC will thereby support independent filmmakers who might not otherwise have the means with which to realize a completed work of independent media art.
- **INFORMATION AND REFERRAL SERVICES.** IMARC is participating in the creation of a unified informational and referral network for independent artists and their work.

Producer services are also available through every phase of media work, from proposal development to all aspects of implementation and dissemination. Training and apprenticeship opportunities are available through NAIM, which also works with individuals and organizations in all forms of art, literature, and communications cross-culturally representing a diversity of approaches, styles, methods, and forms. The services and assistance available through NAIM are usually defined by the individuals and organizations seeking its support and contact.

We should keep a close watch on NAIM's IMARC development as progressive programs are implemented and designed to enhance the

Southeastern independent film community, and as projects are initiated to encourage Indian participation in independent media. For more information, contact:

Native American Indian Media Corporation
Independent Media Artist Resource Center
Post Office Box 59
Strawberry Plains, Tennessee 37871
(615) 933-0606

Southeastern Media Fellowship Program Announced

This Fall marks the second year that Appalshop, a media cooperative in eastern Kentucky, will administer the Southeast Media Fellowship Program. Independent film and videomakers in the ten-state region of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia are eligible to apply to the program for production grants of up to \$5000 for new works or works-in-progress, as well as seven equipment access grants provided by the South Carolina Arts Commission Media Arts Center. The application deadline is February 1, 1985 and the grant awards will be announced by March 20, 1985.

The Southeast Media Fellowship Program is one of seven regional fellowship programs funded by the Media Program of the National Endowment for the Arts in an effort to encourage the growth of media arts throughout the country. NEA has provided approximately \$32,000 in grant funds for this year's program and Appalshop will be seeking additional matching support from state arts agencies within the Southeast region. In the program's first year at Appalshop, a three-member panel of film and video experts awarded nine grants totaling \$39,500 in federal and state funds and made four access grants, for use of film and video equipment, at the South Carolina Arts Commission Media Arts Center. For an application form for the Southeast Media Fellowship Program write: SEMFP c/o Appalshop, Box 743, Whitesburg, Ky. 41858, (606)633-0108.

1985 Equipment Access Grants From SCAC Media Arts Center

The South Carolina Arts Commission Media Arts Center is offering seven equipment access grants to be awarded by the 1985 SEMFP. The grants are for: (1) ¾ inch Video Production--2 weeks use of JVC KY-210 Camera/Sony VO-4800 Deck system (\$3,000 value); (2) 16 mm Film Production--2 weeks use of Aaton LTR 54 or Arriflex BL and Nagra 4.2 Crystal Sync System (\$3,500 value); (3) Video Editing--2 weeks use of Sony 5850/Convergence Editing Suite with Computer Graphics System (\$4,300 value); (4) Film Editing--4 weeks use of 8-plate Steenbeck/Sound

Transfer Studio (\$2,000 value); (5) ½ inch Video Production--2 weeks use of JVC VHS camera/recorder package (\$500 value); (6) Optical Printer--2 weeks use of J-K Optical Printer (\$1,000 value); (7) Computer Graphics--2 weeks use of Symtec PGS high-resolution graphics system (\$1,000 value); For 16mm film ¾" video production grants additional support provided will include a fluid head tripod, one light kit, and two mikes. The Editing Studios are located at the South Carolina Arts Commission Media Arts Center in Columbia, S.C. and are accessible 24-hours a day. Access grants for this year's cycle should be for production work scheduled through December 31, 1985. Applicants wishing to apply for an equipment access grant should check the appropriate box on the application form.

True Romance

(Continued from Page 1)



Artwork from Jan Millsapps' film, TRUE ROMANCE.

"A person's being in love often furnishes comic, and sometimes even tragic phenomena, both because taken possession of by the spirit of the species, he is now ruled by it, and no longer belongs to himself; in this way his conduct becomes inappropriate to the individual." (Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*. Dover Publication. 1959.)

For more information on *True Romance*, contact, Jan Millsapps, 3308 Makeway Drive, Columbia, S.C. 29201.

Joan Strommer teaches film production, and film history courses at Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia, where she is an Assistant Professor in the Photography/Film Dept.

INDEPENDENT SPIRIT is published by the South Carolina Arts Commission Media Arts Center with support from the National Endowment for the Arts and is distributed free of charge to media producers and consumers and other interested individuals and organizations, most of whom are located in the Southeast. Contributions pertaining to the INDEPENDENT SPIRIT or to the independent media community are welcome. All correspondence should be addressed to INDEPENDENT SPIRIT,

South Carolina Arts Commission, 1800 Gervais Street, Columbia, SC 29201. The viewpoints expressed in this issue do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the South Carolina Arts Commission.

The South Carolina Arts Commission is a state agency which promotes the visual, literary, performing and media arts in South Carolina. The SCAC Media Arts Center supports media artists and media arts in a ten-state southeastern region,

which includes Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia, as well as South Carolina. Both SCAC and SCACMAC receive funds from the National Endowment for the Arts.

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